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Inverness Area Command

Newsletter – December 2023

Introduction:

We are pleased to present the latest edition of our community newsletter, designed to keep you up-to-date about the activities and initiatives of our local police officers. This newsletter serves as your window into the ongoing work of officers in your area, featuring insights from the City Centre Policing Team and the Community Beats team.

Our goal is to provide you with a closer look at the dedicated efforts of our police officers to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your communities. We understand the importance of keeping our community members informed and appreciate your continued support as we work together to make our streets even safer and more welcoming.

Thank you for being engaged and informed members of our community. Together we can continue to create a better and safer place for all.

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Community Beats Team

Your community beat team and their areas of responsibility:

Inspector David Mcalpine: Team leader of City Centre Policing Team (CCPT) and Community Beats (CB)



A/PS Keith Whitelaw: Acting Sergeant / Community officer for; **Merkinch and South Kessock.**



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PC Katie Johnstone: Community officer for; **Dalneigh, Torvean, Bught, Scorguie & Kinmylies**



PC Laura Kerr: Community officer for; **Smithton, Culloden, Balloch, Ardersier & Croy**



PC Jo Barclay: Community officer for; **Raigmore, Drakies, Milton of Ley, Crown & Millburn**

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PC Cailean Macleod: Community officer for; **Hilton, Holm, Lochardil, Culduthel and Inshes**



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Road Safety

We have seen the return of parking issues in and around primary and secondary schools at drop up and pick up times. Officers have been attending as many of the local schools as they can during these times to try and assist with some of the issues that have been raised.

We would like to remind parents/carers when they are attending schools at these times to try and be considerate when parking. Local residents have been becoming increasingly frustrated by cars being parked over their access to driveways meaning they can't get out of their homes during these times. There have also been complaints regarding parking on or very close to junctions. We would remind drivers of the Highway Code, specifically rule 243 -

Rule 243

- •DO NOT stop or park:
- •near a school entrance
- •anywhere you would prevent access for Emergency Services
- •at or near a bus or tram stop or taxi rank
- •on the approach to a level crossing/tramway crossing
- •opposite or within 10 metres (32 feet) of a junction, except in an authorised parking space
- •near the brow of a hill or hump bridge
- •opposite a traffic island or (if this would cause an obstruction) another parked vehicle
- •where the kerb has been lowered to help wheelchair users and powered mobility vehicles
- •in front of an entrance to a property
- •on a bend
- •where you would obstruct cyclists' use of cycle facilities
- Except when forced to do so by stationary traffic.

As of the 11th December 2023 pavement parking/drop kerb parking and double parking will be enforced by the Highland Council as per The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 as Police Scotland have no enforcement powers.

Serious Organised Crime

County Lines:

A definition of county lines is:

'A form of criminal activity in which drug dealers in major cities establish networks for the supply and sale of drugs to users in towns and rural areas, using other people (typically those who are young or otherwise vulnerable) to carry, store, and sell the drugs.'

These are organised crime groups and are responsible for the increase in serious assaults in the city. Any information can be anonymously passed Via Crime Stoppers who are an independent charity that gives people the power to speak up to stop crime. The information is passed on anonymously 0800 555 111 or contact Police Scotland 101 or in an emergency 999

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Anti-social behaviour & Disorder

The community has brought to our attention several instances of anti-social behaviour. In response, we have been collaborating with various partners, including housing, the Highland Council, and the Scottish fire and rescue service, to address these issues. When anti-social behaviour is reported, we focus patrols in the affected areas to deter such conduct and make ourselves available to engage with community members who have been affected.

Many people approach us to share their concerns about what's happening in their neighbourhood, and we are always ready to provide advice or take necessary action to assist. We actively encourage and welcome this type of community engagement.

Theft & Dishonesty

We have been actively involved in addressing drug offences and several cases of dishonesty. Working closely with partner agencies, we've been dedicated to identifying suspects to ensure offenders are held accountable. We have conducted regular patrols in targeted areas to act as a deterrent against such activities and have made ourselves easily accessible to anyone in need of advice or wanting to report any concerns.

Protecting Vulnerable People

Our commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals extends to actively engaging with all members of the community, regardless of age. We readily offer assistance whenever the opportunity arises, from helping parents with challenging toddlers on their shopping trips to having a blether at the local knitting club. The community actively points out vulnerable individuals, enabling us to provide necessary support and prevent exploitation.

Community officers regularly patrol selected areas in a car, on a bike or on foot. This approach is designed to enhance the approachability of the Police and foster open lines of communication with the community.

Other Duties

Members of the team continue to perform their specialist duties; Police negotiator, mountain rescue team member, sexual offence liaison officer and wildlife crime officer. They have aided in urgent response policing, including handling calls for housebreakings, missing children and officer assistance incidents. They have provided cover for protecting crime loci. Their primary focus remains on areas with elevated crime rates and recurring incidents, even though additional hours per shift without abstractions would be desirable for broader coverage of their designated areas. Priority is consistently given to areas with the highest crime levels.

Given the rising demand on police resources, they have provided essential cover in various areas, including Dingwall and Ross-shire where duties have been redistributed to ensure continued cover.

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From the team:

A/PS Keith Whitelaw: Acting Sergeant / Community officer for; Merkinch and South Kessock.

Throughout the month of December, I've had the privilege of serving as the acting Sergeant for community policing in Inverness, Fort Augustus, Drumnadrochit and Beauly. Here are some of the highlights of what my month has looked like:

Forward Planning: I have attended various meetings to plan and address community concerns that have been raised by community members.

Foot Patrols: I have patrolled in the Merkinch area of Inverness, Beauly, Drumnadrochit and Fort Augustus. Interacted with local residents, tourists and business owners aiming to strengthen bonds in the community.

School Visits: I have engaged with staff and pupils in Fort Augustus Primary and Secondary school during an unprompted visit to the area. I played football with some youngsters and had the chance to speak with some senior students preparing for prelims.

I also visited Merkinch Primary, Inverness to speak with staff and pupils. I was able to address some instances of naughty behaviour and offer advice / assistance to staff.

Warrant checks: I carried out various warrant address checks resulting in the apprehension of wanted individuals, contributing to the safety of the community.

Community officer deployments: It has been my responsibility to direct community officers to focus on areas identified by you, our community members, ensuring a proactive approach to issues that matter most to you.

As the festive season has come to a close I want to take a moment to express my hope that you all had a Merry Christmas. I hope this time was filled with joy, warmth and cherished moments with your family and friends.

Thank you for your ongoing support and here's to a safe and prosperous New Year.

PC Katie Johnstone: Community officer for; Dalneigh, Torvean, Bught, Scorguie & Kinmylies

During the past month I have attended Dalneigh Primary School during pick up and drop off times, and given advice to parents who are parking inconsiderately. This continues to be a problem where parents/caregivers are attending late and parking as close to the gates as possible without consideration for road markings or safety.

I attended the school fete in Merkinch Primary school and was able to see the wonderful decorations the school children had made. The event was well attended and good to see the older children contributing by managing the stalls and sales of items.

I assist response policing when needed and have attended numerous incidents in relation to suicidal persons and concern for persons. As we have entered the Christmas period this

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has become an ever increasing demand on the Police and as such I have been required to assist in response policing on a more frequent basis.

I have carried out foot patrols within Dalneigh, Merkinch and Hilton, focusing on the areas of more concern due to criminality.

I was honoured to draw the winning numbers for Merkinch Charity shop raffle. It was nice to see the wonderful prizes being handed out to members of the local community. It's always good to see the community working together and I am always happy to attend and support where I can.



This month I was able to welcome a group of S5/6 pupils from Charleston Academy to the Police station for a visit. We introduced them to two of our Police dogs along with their handler, who gave them a description of his role as a dog handler. They had a tour of the station and even spent some 'time' in the cells.



I continue to work closely with other community beats officers, and will often be in other areas of town as needed.

I have assisted in searching for high risk missing persons in my role as Mountain Rescue.

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PC Laura Kerr: Community officer for; **Smithton, Culloden, Balloch, Ardersier & Croy**

I continue to work closely with councillors and community councillors with any issues they raise. I have been made aware of ongoing issues in Croy and have liaised directly with the council for the area, along with carrying out patrols in this area.

I still continue to monitor the situation at Inshes Retail Park, where I identified the main young people responsible for antisocial behaviour. This has resulted in them being reported to the Children's reporter, and while the antisocial behaviour has declined considerably I am still aware of further incidents occurring.

I've also attended schools in my area at pick up and drop off times to monitor the parking and provide advice when suitable.

PC Jo Barclay: Community officer for; **Raigmore, Drakies, Milton of Ley, Crown & Millburn**

I continue to receive complaints about the parking at Drakies Primary school. I have attended at the drop off and pick up times in order to monitor the situation and give advice to drivers when required. I have also lent them our 'parking buddies'. They will be able to put these out at peak times to remind drivers to park safely. I've also been monitoring the general parking in the Drakies area. With the new legislation about pavement parking and the council's authority to enforce this, we would expect to see traffic wardens in that area to ensure compliance. As this is a decriminalised parking restriction the Police have no power to enforce.

I have carried out patrols of the Croy area during school pick up and drop off times due to community tensions in the area.

I have carried out foot patrol in the Raigmore area, speaking to members of the community council. I regularly attend the CARE group and following concerns for a vulnerable adult in the community carried out a home visit to provide any assistance I could.

There was a concerning report that a Milton of Leys Primary pupil had been approached by an unknown person in a vehicle and offered a ride. I have noted statements from witnesses and enlisted the help of the other beats officers to ensure extra patrols were made of the school following the incident. All lines of enquiry have been carried out in relation to this and there have been no further reports of anything suspicious that we have been made aware of. I have been in touch with the school throughout for reassurance.

I continue to work closely with PC Laura Kerr in tackling the anti-social behaviour in Inshes Retail Park. This consists of patrols in the area, checking CCTV, identifying suspects and phone calls to their parents/caregivers.

PC Cailean Macleod: Community officer for; **Hilton, Holm, Lochardil, Culduthel and Inshes**

During the month of December I have made various foot patrols and cycle patrols across right my beats in order to engage with people and provide a high visibility reassuring

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presence in the community. I have supported colleagues in response policing with support at a siege, high risk missing person/s enquiries and housebreakings.

I have carried out the following duties:

- Partnership working with housing department to tackle anti-social tenants
- Assist in the apprehension of male wanted for robbery
- Visits to vulnerable persons to ensure their welfare
- Road safety input to secondary school pupils at Inverness Fire Station joint Fire/Ambulance/Police initiative
- School visits and assembly talks
- Ongoing work with other Police units targeting those concerned in supply drugs
- Speed checks
- Visiting licensed premises – bars, shops and hotels
- Engaging with local businesses in particular those blighted by shoplifting
- Mountain rescue team callouts
- Wildlife crime officer duties – 2 x enquiries



Daviot, Farr, Strathearn and Rural Beats – No assigned beat officer

The team have received complaints regarding vehicles speeding through the village particularly first thing in the morning and then again later in the afternoon. Officers have been in the local area when duties allow to monitor the issue and carry out speed checks. Enquires have been carried out to trace the responsible persons.

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Statistics

Crime statistics for your community council area can be found using the following link –

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/how-we-do-it/crime-data/>

Specialist Units Deployments / Incidents of Note:

There has been incidents in the past month involving the use of specialist police units within Inverness. These have all been dealt with quickly and come to a safe conclusion. Local Community councils have been informed of any of these incidents within their areas.

Some areas have required an increase in police presence due to the serious nature of crimes. Whilst the increase of officers may cause alarm to local residents, please be reassured that the increase of officers is to allow police to carry out thorough investigations into these incidents and have them concluded as soon as possible.

We will always try and contact local community councillors if an incident occurs that generates a lot of police activity in the area for an update and reassurance.

Police were called to an incident in Drumnadrochit and this required partnership working with other agencies to resolve. There was a large Police presence at the time, and were able to resolve with no injuries to any person.

Operation Respect

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A long-standing initiative aimed at keeping Inverness a safe place to live, work and visit over the festive season has been launched.

Operation Respect sees agencies and local voluntary partner's pool together their wide ranging and varied skills to tackle street disorder, anti-social behaviour, retail crime and other forms of criminality. Crucially it is also designed to provide assistance to vulnerable people – whether that is a result of mental health concerns, alcohol or substance abuse – and provide a safe environment and the provision of pastoral care to those who are in need.

We actively engage in proactive measures to ensure that the city is a safe place to be, whether you live and work in the city, a visiting group enjoying our hospitality, or simply a lone person walking home at night.

Although Operation Respect is a Police Scotland initiative led by Inverness area command, it is very much a partnership between organisations dedicated to providing expertise in multiple areas, contributing towards the wellbeing of those in our community.

The combined efforts of those involved have enabled us to provide trained first aid teams walking within the city centre to combined police, paramedic and mental health practitioners on mobile patrols and responding to those in crisis.

There is also immediate access to pastoral care and a heightened level of stewarding within the City.

Operation Respect commences on Friday, 1 December, 2023 and runs every Friday and Saturday until the last Saturday evening – Saturday, 30 December, 2023.

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Inspector David Mcalpine said: "We are once again preparing for a busy festive period. We are delighted to be working alongside partner agencies to keep people safe over the festive period in Inverness.

"We aim to ensure everyone has a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year."

Participants in this year's festive campaign are:

Police Scotland
Highland Council
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Scottish Ambulance Service
NHS Highland
BID Inverness
Highland Third Sector Interface
Highland Drug & Alcohol Partnership
Street Pastors
Medical Emergency Response Team (MERT Highland)
Community Justice Partnership
Mikeysline
Trading Standards
The Discovery College- Centred Scotland

City Centre (CCPT)

With Christmas approaching fast the City Centre Police Team aim to have a prominent presence within the City Centre along with colleagues from our response policing during Operation Respect.

The Team continue with their commitment to tackle the youth disorder issues within the City Centre by engagement and attempting to divert them from this behaviour. We are having some success with this approach but acknowledge that some issues remain. We are also utilising the power of the law when we can and submitting reports to the Children's reporter and Procurator Fiscal when crime has been detected.

The national issue of shoplifting is still a prominent issue within the City Centre and is something we continue to deal with on a daily basis. We have had some positive results with shoplifting incidents in the past few weeks which has led to arrests and several reports being submitted to the Procurator Fiscal. The City Centre team is fully committed to continuing this with the assistance the Loss prevention Officers, BID Task Team and the CCTV operators.

The festive campaign Operation Respect are now in full swing with our aim being to keep people safe when they are celebrating the festivities within the City Centre. Our main objectives during the operation will be to reduce anti-social behaviour, incidents of violence

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and disorder. This Operation will see a substantial increase in Police resources being deployed into the City Centre and will commence late November. Further to the increase in Police numbers we will also have a welfare vehicle in place.

Hot spots for anti-social behaviour remain the same as previous months namely Falcon Square, Farraline Park Bus Station and Rose Street car park. We continue our commitment to patrol these areas as much as possible and engage with businesses affected by this issue. We also continue to work with all partner agencies within the City Centre by utilising the shop safe radio link which continues to be a valuable tool.

In the last few weeks we have experienced some vigils outside the Town House with regards to the support of Palestine. We have had positive engagement with members of this group and have had no significant issues as a result.

Contact us

Police Scotland can be contacted via a variety of ways. In an emergency and/or when a crime is ongoing, please dial 999 otherwise please use the 101 phone number to report any other crimes or matters.

For non-urgent routines matters or to highlight issues or make contact with specific officers then the following email addresses can be used:

Inverness rural beats – Beaully / Cannich / Drumnadrochit / Fort Augustus / Foyers:

HighlandsandIslandsBeaullyFortAugustus@scotland.police.uk

For concerns and issues in the city of Inverness area and the rural beats of Ardersier, Daviot, Tomatin and Strathdearn:

HighlandsandIslandsCommunityBeatsInverness@scotland.police.uk

Please be aware that this e-mail address is not monitored 24/7 and is a contact email. Specific crimes should not be reported by these email addresses. Crimes should be reported via the telephone systems 999 or 101.

Any matters raised at community council meetings or specific community concerns should be emailed in and include the following details to enable your enquiry to deal with efficiently:

- Contact name
- Contact phone number
- Details of the issue – times/places/people/history of the issue

Policing Survey

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/how-we-do-it/research-and-insights/your-police/>

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